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8. PRIDI REPORTED HOPEFUL OF RETURNING TO THAILAND SOON

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Former premier Pridi hopes to be able to return to Thailand next month, according to his wife, who has just returned from four years in Communist China. She told the Bangkok press on 4 April that her husband, now in Canton, was "disturbed" about economic conditions in Thailand, as well as "disunity" among the Thai people, and that he hoped Thailand would emulate the neutral policies of its neighbors. Madame Pridi also insisted that Communist China is engaged in "peaceful construction," rather than war preparations.

Pridi has been in exile since 1949. His return at this time would be intended to further Chinese Communist objectives. Left-wing elements fared badly in the recent Thai elections, but their lack of success may have stemmed largely from the absence of an effective nationally known leader such as Pridi.

There are indications that certain Thai officials may favor allowing Pridi to come home. While Premier Phibun and Defense Minister Sarit are reportedly still against such a move, there is a possibility they might accept Pridi's presence in the belief that he would be useful in dealing with the Chinese Communists.

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